

Labor & Public Employees

March 8, 2022

Support of four bills:

H.B. 5353 AAC A Fair Work Week Schedule

H.B. 5356 AAC Pandemic Pay for Essential Workers

S.B. 312 AAC Expansion of Connecticut Paid Sick Days

S.B. 318 AAC Captive Audience Meetings

Dear Senator Kushner, Representative Porter, and distinguished members of the Labor & Public Employees Committee,

Thanks for the opportunity to submit testimony for the March 8, 2022 public hearing. My name is Sarah Ganong, I'm a proud Hartford resident and the State Director of Connecticut Working Families, an advocacy organization dedicated to building an economy and a democracy that works for everyone, not just the wealthy and well-connected. My written testimony submitted below is in support of four bills: H.B. 5353, AAC A Fair Work Week Schedule, H.B. 5356, AAC Pandemic Pay for Essential Workers, S.B. 312, AAC the Expansion of Connecticut Paid Sick Days, and S.B. 318, AAC Captive Audience Meetings.

First, I ask you to **support H.B. 5353, AAC A Fair Work Week Schedule**. This is the fifth year in a row that fair scheduling legislation has been brought before this committee, and I sincerely hope that you will support it out of committee again this year. Far too many workers in Connecticut – hundreds of thousands of low-wage hourly workers – are struggling to earn a stable income because of unpredictable work schedules. We believe at Working Families that *all* workers have a right to a good, stable job that pays them a living wage and treats them with respect. This Fair Work Week bill before you will ensure that hourly workers in key industries will have access to a stable job that respects them, their families, and their time.

H.B. 5353 covers hourly workers at any retail, food service, and hospitality business (including franchises) that have more than 500 employees globally. The restaurants must have over 30 locations. These industries are

the most common offenders in regards to last-minute schedule changes. The bill requires employers to provide non-binding yet fact based estimates of weekly schedules at the time of hire, and allows employees to decline any hours not included in their original posted schedule without retaliation. Many on this committee have in the past referenced employees who desire flexible schedules or want to pick up additional shifts – employees can consent to additional hours in writing.

One of the more dangerous shift work considerations in Connecticut is “clopenings” – when workers have the final shift of the evening and the opening shift the next day. This practice gives many workers an inadequate amount of time to sleep between shifts. H.B. 5353 guarantees employees adequate rest by allowing workers to decline shifts with less than 11 hours between them. H.B. 5353 provides workers with the dignity and respect they deserve, yet it would greatly benefit their lives in practical ways too. Workers often can’t reliably attend educational classes, schedule medical appointments, arrange childcare, or procure affordable and regular transportation to work when they are suffering with variable and last-minute schedules. Providing clarity and expectations around work hours in advance means that they can ensure balance in their lives, and count on their hours to make ends meet while meeting other obligations and responsibilities as well.

House Bill 5356, AAC Pandemic Pay for Essential Workers, is an essential and necessary bill of pandemic response that must pass this legislation session. Working Families joins other members of the Recovery for All coalition in support of this bill. For two years, we’ve called our essential workers heroes, from the grocery store clerks to nurses, from bus drivers to the folks picking up our garbage. These workers risked their lives in frontline roles to keep our communities strong during the difficult years of the pandemic, often without little protective equipment and before we had the protection offered by vaccinations and booster shots. This bill, HB 5356, would provide Connecticut’s heroes, our essential workers, with a pandemic pay bonus for time worked during the pandemic. Our state needs

to put money where our mouths are and compensate these workers, and honor their commitment, dedication, and countless sacrifices.

Working Families also testifies **in support of Senate Bill 312, AAC The Expansion of Connecticut Paid Sick Days**. After two years in a global pandemic, this update to Connecticut's paid sick day law is sorely needed. Covering all Connecticut workers, regardless of their job title or the size of their employer, is the right thing to do for workers and it's the right thing to do to protect public health. Additionally, alignment with our state's new paid family & medical leave program, as S.B. 312 proposes, means that workers can take paid sick days to care for their chosen family members as well as themselves.

In 2011, Connecticut led the nation with the passage of the first statewide paid sick days law. Now, 11 years later, we have the chance to make history again and continue to update our law to address the challenges of today. Accessing paid sick days is something that all workers deserve, not just ones at large companies or in certain service occupations. Continuing to exclude workers at small companies or domestic workers is just plain wrong – and we urge passage of S.B. 312 to address these holes.

Finally, I write today in support of **S.B. 318, AAC Captive Audience Meetings**. As a former founding union member at my own workplace, this bill means a lot to me as I know others do not receive the same supportive environment from their own workplace as myself and my colleagues did. So far, 2022 has been an inspiring year of workers standing up for their rights across the country, from Starbucks to REI to teachers in Minneapolis. But even here in Connecticut today, workers who desire to form unions struggle to unite without fear or intimidation. Our labor laws are badly broken, and many organizing workers are subjected to captive audience meetings. These mandatory meetings during work hours are often used to threaten or harass workers about union support behind closed doors – and workers can be disciplined or fired if they don't attend. But in Connecticut, through S.B. 318, we have an opportunity to act. This bill before you today protects the fundamental right of workers to make their own choice to form or join a

union, and ensures that each worker can make this decision without fear or intimidation from their employer.

Thanks for your time and attention to these important bills, and I urge passage through your committee.

Sarah Ganong

Hartford

State Director | Connecticut Working Families